Doesn't Believe She Was Coerced

Saxbe Calls Patty 'Criminal'

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By Bernard Hurwitz
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO, April 17 — Attorney General William B. Saxbe branded Patricia Hearst a common criminal today, and a federal grand jury began considering whether she willingly wielded a gun in a terrorist bank robbery.

Saxbe said in Washington that he was convinced the 20-year-old newspaper heiress was "not a reluctant participant" in the $10,000-robbery Monday by a heavily armed gang which wounded two persons in its getaway.

The terrorist Symbionese Liberation Army dragged Miss Hearst screaming from her Berkeley apartment 2½ months ago. In a "communique" April 3, she renounced her family and swore she had been converted to become a revolutionary fighter.

"It would appear to me that she was not a reluctant participant in this robbery," Saxbe told his weekly news conference, adding that SLA members all are "common criminals." Asked if he included Miss Hearst, he said, "Miss Hearst is a part of it."

PATRICIA HEARST
. . . sought as witness

Miss Hearst's father, newspaper executive Randolph A. Hearst, called Saxbe's comments "speculation" and refused further comment.

Charles Bates, the FBI agent in charge of the case, also refused comment other than to say: "The FBI is continuing its aggressive investigation looking to a solution of the Hearst kidnaping case and the bank robbery."

U.S. Attorney James Browning said that evidence in the bank robbery is being presented to a grand jury and that indictments are possible by next week.

"It is entirely possible that the evidence will show that there was no duress or coercion on the part of these people, but that is a matter for the grand jury to determine," he said.

According to a guard at

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Saxbe Says Patty Wasn't Coerced

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the bank, Edward Shea, Miss Hearst took an active part in the robbery—"giving . . . orders and all that, saying she would shoot the first guy that moved.

"She wasn't scared. She let it be known that she meant business," the 66-year-old guard said today. "She had a gun and looked ready to use it."

Bates said 100 to 125 federal agents are working on the case and again said he does not know the location of the SLA hideout. Police say the SLA is a heavily armed, multiracial group of about 25 men and women.

Bank cameras photographed Miss Hearst along with three other white women and a black man during the robbery of a Hibernia Bank. The photographs showed Miss Hearst and two other members of the robbery team holding weapons.

Federal bank robbery warrants have been issued for the three women and the man, and Miss Hearst is sought for arrest as a material witness. Bail was set at $500,000 each.

The massive search for the gang of nine men and women centered in San Francisco because of reports that SLA members had been spotted here, Saxbe said.

Saxbe also said that he doesn't know whether Miss Hearst was the victim of an authentic kidnaping. Asked whether authorities now consider her a kidnap victim or a bank robber, Saxbe replied, "The answer is both."

Asked for the basis of his conclusion that she willingly joined in the robbery, the Attorney General replied, "Based on the activities of the other people involved and the observations of witnesses in the bank and the photographs, my personal conclusion is that she was not a reluctant participant. There's room for others to say she was coerced into it, or suggest that—that there were two guns that were pointed at her and so on."

In another development today, four other alleged SLA members were named in perjury warrants for making false statements to obtain drivers' licenses.

Alameda County District Attorney Lowell Jensen said the four are linked to the bank robbery, the Hearst kidnaping and the Nov. 6 murder of Oakland Schools Supt. Marcus Foster for which the SLA claimed responsibility.

Named in the state arrest orders are: William Taylor Harris, 27; Emily Montague Harris, 27; Angela Atwood, 25, and William Lawton Wolfe, 23.

California Attorney General Evelle Younger said today in Sacramento that the false driver's licenses apparently were used to cash checks and other purposes.

Younger also said that the danger to Miss Hearst's life from the SLA apparently has lessened.

"I think the evidence is quite clear that she probably isn't in as much danger from those who participated in this robbery as she may have been at one time," he said.